

Fishing Tournament Advisory Committee

June 29, 2005

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Baymont Inn, Stevens Point

MEETING NOTES

- I. Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)
 - A. Welcome and introduction of attendees.
 - B. Agenda Repair.

Attendees introduced themselves. Present at the meeting were: Warren Zaren, Competitive American Sportfishing Tournaments; Chuck Rolfsmeyer, Bass Federation; Mike Hofmann, Wisconsin Bass Federation; Robert Selk, Trout Unlimited; Steve Winters, Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance; Brett Staplemann, Wisconsin Bowfishing Association; Bob Miller, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation; Ted Lind, Wisconsin Council of Sport Fish Organizations; Joel Everts, Packerland CVB; Patrick Schmalz, WDNR.

- II. WDNR Update (1 hour) – Patrick Schmalz, WDNR
 - A. Meeting notes from April 16 meeting.
 - 1. Suggested edits.
 - 2. Finalization of notes.

Patrick Schmalz asked if any members had comments or edits for the draft meeting notes from April 16, which were mailed to the FTAC membership. No one had comments and thus the notes were finalized. Schmalz will provide the final meeting notes to the FTAC at or before the next meeting.

- B. Pilot Program Evaluation.

Schmalz provided some background regarding developments related to the bass fishing tournament pilot program evaluation. The WDNR has contracted with Dr. David Marcouiller, UW-Madison professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, to conduct the economic impact assessment of the bass fishing tournament pilot program. Dr. Marcouiller has a particular interest in tourism based economics and recently completed an economic impact assessment of an In-Fisherman walleye tournament held on Lake Pepin in 2002.

- 1. Elite 50 event, Lake Wissota; economic impacts data collection.

The original intent was to conduct an economic impact evaluation of the Elite 50 event at Lake Wissota utilizing existing data on regional patterns of expenditures. However, we were fortunate to team with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and the Chippewa Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau to collect expenditure information from spectators, sponsors and participants in the Elite 50. The Chippewa Valley CVB utilized volunteers to conduct face-to-face surveys. Results are currently being tabulated.

Over the course of the 4-day tournament, just over 180 spectator surveys were completed. Thirty-nine spectators refused to participate in the survey. Interviews were conducted at

the View (weigh-in location), the shuttle location, and the outdoor expo. It was estimated that as many as 3,000 spectators attended weigh-ins Fri. and Sat. The sample size was lower than we would have liked to see, and at the moment we are unsure of the impact of low sample size. Some problems were encountered:

- Surveying was hard at the View because people came immediately before the weigh in and left right after - visitors did not want to be disturbed while they were watching the weigh in.
- The best days for surveying were Friday and Sunday because of the crowds.
- Interviewing on the shuttle was hard to do.
- The best place to survey was at the expo on the days it was open.

We will most likely still be able to utilize the spectator information. Additionally, we learned a little about how to potentially improve data collection in future events.

Chris Horton at BASS will be assisting in collecting expenditure data from anglers and sponsors/exhibitors. We provided a written survey to be completed by the anglers, but only received 6 from the anglers while in Chippewa Falls. No efforts were made at the event to contact sponsors.

A final report is expected to be completed by December 31, 2005 (most likely sooner).

Joel Everts presented some information regarding the Chippewa Valley CVB survey, including a copy of the survey.

Concern was raised over not collecting data at the Elite 50 relating to delayed mortality or sociological impact data from lake shore property owners. It was emphasized that lake shore property owners would be most directly impacted by tournaments and are thus a critical group to survey.

2. Sociological and biological impacts.

Schmalz explained that sociological and biological impacts were not measured at the Elite 50, mainly due to fiscal constraints and short time frame. In addition details were presented relating to the progress related to these aspects of the evaluation.

SOCIOLOGICAL IMPACTS – Discussions with WDNR sociological researchers have resulted in an initial timeline of questionnaire development and testing beginning this fall, and execution of a mail survey next spring and summer with final report done by December 31, 2006. The objective will be to measure anglers' attitudes towards tournament fishing, special exemptions, along with perceived problems with tournaments. The questionnaire will be developed with input and tested prior to execution.

Concern was raised over sampling randomly statewide because many, if not most, of the people will have no experience related to tournament fishing and will likely then not provide valuable insight. It was felt that those most directly affected have to be surveys (e.g. lake shore property owners). An example was given regarding complaints by Wal-

Mart customers relating to a weigh-in at a Wal-Mart in Green Bay to emphasize the need to sample those directly exposed to the tournaments.

BIOLOGICAL IMPACTS – Schmalz introduced a graduate student, hired by Dr. Michael Bozek at the UWSP Cooperative Fisheries Research Unit, to conduct the biological impacts component of the evaluation. He noted that the FLW Everstart event in August would be the first event where mortality estimates would be attempted. Craig Williamson provided some background information on himself and fielded questions from the FTAC. He also provided some literature review to the group. Discussion regarding various aspects of tournament mortality ensued, such as live well density, water temperature, etc...

Chuck Rolfsmeyer recommended looking at studies from Ontario.

C. WDNR tournament working group meeting update.

Schmalz stated that the WDNR tournament working group met June 9. He presented the issues discussed and recommendations made by the WDNR working group.

1. Fishing tournament definition.

Schmalz indicated that there was a great deal of discussion by the WDNR tournament working group regarding modifying the tournament definition. Those discussions emphasized the basic purpose of permitting tournaments. That original intent was to determine the extent of tournament fishing in the state and it is apparent after nearly ten years that we have been missing a potentially significant component of tournament fishing being conducted on waters of the state, those being the frequent club outings. Thus the DNR team recommended (as did FTAC) that the definition become more inclusive by changing the ‘and’ to ‘or’ with respect to number of boats/participants and prize value. Additionally, the DNR working group felt that in some parts of the state, many smaller events would still be missed, which could have a cumulative impact. Thus it was recommended that the number of boats also be reduced to 10.

Ted Lind forwarded to the committee that he felt there is a distinction between tournaments and club outings. Additionally, it was noted that the Wisconsin State BASS Federation feels that the change to ‘or’ from ‘and’ will already cause substantial changes to many clubs’ policies.

Concern was raised club tournaments, that would fall under a new more inclusive tournament definition, could receive all the available permits for a given water (if those permits are indeed limited) and thus limit the availability of permits for other events, even when the water may be able to handle more or larger events (e.g. what about a 10-boat event taking away any opportunity for another event?).

It was noted that the ‘pressure’ on the water (i.e. number of boats) was most important, thus ‘pressure’ needed to be regulated rather than simply the number of events. Tournaments need to be considered differently based on size. The following suggestion was offered as a regulatory unit:

$$\text{Pressure (boat*days)} = \text{number of boats} * \text{number of days}.$$

There was general agreement from the committee.

Warren Zaren felt that tournaments that utilize private access should also be considered differently.

We need a broader definition because down the road they may be able to get special privileges.

The FTAC felt that 10 boats was too few (with few exceptions).

2. Regulating the number of tournaments.

Schmalz presented that the DNR workgroup was split on whether we should limit the number of tournaments on specific waters. Additionally this would be addressed by regulating the frequency of events.

Chuck Rolfsmeyer expressed concern about the weekly tournaments, stating they do not take care of the fish. Regulations should be developed to enforce rules on “the bad guys”. The Madison Chain has nightly tournaments twice per week in addition to the weekend tournaments; that’s too many!

Hofmann/Stapleman pointed out that despite high tournament pressure, the fishery on the Madison Chain is fantastic. Tournaments have a bad reputation with respect to biological impacts.

3. Regulating the size of tournaments.

Schmalz noted that the DNR workgroup did not feel it was necessary or appropriate to write rules regulating the size of tournaments. The group agreed that conditions should be placed on the permit specifying how fish are to be handled and the organizer can plan their event accordingly.

Roger Dreher did not feel comfortable with not regulating the size of tournaments (e.g. number of boats per acre, number of available boat landings). We would be asking for trouble with overcrowding.

There was consensus amongst the FTAC that species need to be regulated differently with respect tournament regulation.

Roger Dreher offered a suggestion, stating that we should utilize science to tell us what the threshold should be for a maximum number of fishing tournaments on a water body, and above that threshold, a trigger is set.

Warren Zaren agreed, stating that a guideline could be created.

Schmalz recommended that tournament rules be restrictive with the ability to waive these criteria based on specified criteria. Local fisheries staff can evaluate the specific criteria (e.g. public access availability; potential user conflict).

4. Regulating the frequency of tournaments.

Schmalz stated that the DNR tournament workgroup felt it was appropriate to regulate the frequency of tournaments being held on individual waters based on the size of the water body.

- < 450 acres – Events must be separated by at least 2 weeks. Only one event simultaneously (game fish only).
- 450 – 3,000 acres – Events must be separated by at least 1 week. Only one event simultaneously (game fish only).
- > 3,000 acres – No limit on the frequency of events. Biologist may limit the number of events held simultaneously based on potential user conflicts. Discretions need to be identified.
- Availability of public access.
- Water temperature.

The FTAC recommended we instead utilize the pressure equation (number of days * number of boats). The remaining questions related to this include: 1) should it be a species by species issue? 2) Do we need to consider Grandfathering?

D. Fishing tournament fees update.

After the last meeting, Schmalz checked with legal staff at DNR regarding the authority within Act 249 as it relates to specifying what tournament fees collected are spent on. Act 249 does NOT establish specific spending authority or establish a dedicated account for tournament fees. Thus tournament fees collected are added to the fish and wildlife account, which is where our license and SFR dollars go. This may limit our ability to establish a fee system similar to Trout Stamp or Great Lakes Stamp. The legislature must specify dedicated/segreated accounts via statute. Establishing such authorities would require legislative change.

A request was made to have WDNR legal staff draft legislation. However, it was recommended that such a request for legislation come from the FTAC, an external group. Steve Winters stated that he would contact his local legislator and inquire about potential legislative action to establish a dedicated account and spending authority for tournament fees.